

Charitable Habits

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Nations differ in their history, politics, economics, and culture. Although the first three of these differences have been carefully described and explained by scholars, hardly anyone has done a thorough job of explaining culture...

In this book, Arthur Brooks has found a way to show one aspect of culture: how much time and money people give to charitable causes. Brooks is a rigorously trained scholar (it is very hard to get a PhD from the Rand Graduate School) who can combine careful studies of charity with a direct and compelling way of explaining what he has learned...

There are other, more important reasons that explain charity. Religion is one: Religious people donate more money than nonreligious ones, even to secular causes. And since America is a more religious nation than are most European democracies, charitable giving here occurs at a higher rate. There are other causes as well...

In short, a careful examination of charity tells us a lot about a nation's culture. And Brooks suggests that charity may also be linked to the economy. It is obvious that affluent people give away more money than poor ones. This may just show that you can only give away money that you already have. But Brooks suggests a different and more fascinating possibility: It may be that charitable giving helps improve the economy. The link may be that charitable habits promote happiness and personal confidence and are associated with the development of good character in one's children.

(Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth About Compassionate Conservatism (America's Charity Divide—Who Gives, Who Doesn't, and Why it Matters) by Arthur C. Brooks, New York: Basic Books, Kindle, 2006, Location 62, 72, & 84 of 4013, From Foreword by James Q. Wilson)